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10 September 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
THROUGH : Deputy Director for Intelligence
SUBJECT : National Intelligence Survey Program
-- Assessment and Plans

1. A year ago, I was given responsibility for management of the National Intelligence Survey program. I have formed some opinions concerning the program and its future, and I have initiated a number of changes in the product. In view of the nature of some of the thoughts I want to express to you on the subject, this informal memorandum seems appropriate.

2. The NIS program publishes the oldest national intelligence product, and the NIS Committee is the oldest of the USIB committees. From the beginning the NIS story has been one of overly ambitious goals and limited or shrinking resources. The original goal was up-to-date, worldwide, detailed coverage, encyclopedic in scope, that would satisfy all interagency requirements for basic intelligence. The program has never come close to achieving its original goals.

3. Early emphasis in the NIS was on intelligence related to the needs of the 1940's when the conduct of military operations and of military government in many areas were major national activities. In the mid-1960's heavy requirements were added to meet an instant national passion for counterinsurgency. The content was largely descriptive, but, gradually, more sophisticated political, economic, and sociological data and analysis crept into NIS publications.

4. Throughout its history the NIS program has been under critical scrutiny, and despite the weight of its original philosophical and organizational rationale, there has been change. The trends have been toward more realistic identification of goals and the matching of goals to resources. Universal coverage was rejected in favor of concentration on priority areas. Time cycles for updating were lengthened. The General Survey became the centerpiece of the

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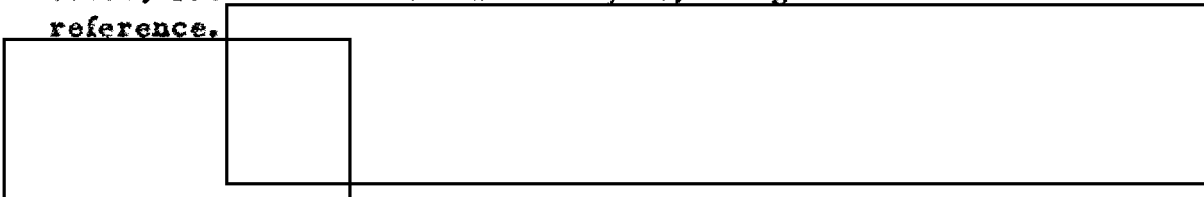
program, reducing the emphasis on detail, and the publication of several detailed sections was discontinued. The tendencies inherent in those changes have yet to run their full course.

5. The NIS has often been at cross-purposes with itself, seeking to be both an encyclopedic data base and a useful orientation reference for high-level planners and policymakers. Discerning a proper audience and capturing it has always posed a dilemma for the managers of the NIS program. On the one hand, there has never been, nor is there likely to be, sufficient resources allocated to create and to maintain the kind of worldwide, on-shelf, up-to-date data base essential to operational planning, as was originally conceived. On the other hand, the high-level, generalist reader finds the NIS too burdensomely detailed for his purposes. The General Survey has emerged as a compromise.

6. But I find that the General Survey lacks internal integrity. And it has never solved its identity crisis. The quality of research, analysis, and writing within a given volume varies widely. There is unnecessary overlap and lack of balance among its various chapters. For years, the volume has been written to an elaborate and detailed formula, set down in the Standard Instructions, and it has become increasingly and excessively wooden and dull.

7. Except for the uneven quality of the inputs, most of the above-listed shortcomings can be corrected by aggressive and enlightened editing. Historically, NIS editors have been instructed to lay very light hands on contributions. They were conditioned to be processors. The NIS editors now are under a different set of instructions; they are charged with being editors in the broad, irascible and honorable manner of the art.

8. A series of changes in the General Survey have been initiated. My intent is to reshape the book gradually so that the volumes emerging during FY 72 will be markedly different from their predecessors. The General Survey will aim directly and consciously at readers seeking broad, basic information and analysis, and general orientation and reference.



The changes in the General Survey include:

- a. An annotated Table of Contents to help the reference reader.
- b. Heretofore, the Introduction was a compilation of sentences culled from various chapters and strung together. It is now replaced by a short, independent essay on the major trends or dynamics that characterize the country. My intent is that the introduction open the book with style and class.
- c. Chapter 2, written by DIA and stressing military geography, is moved to the rear of the volume where it does not interrupt the story-line. In its place, Geography Division of OSCI contributes a short, culturally oriented geographic lead into the Sociological, Political, and Economic chapters.
- d. Photographs and graphics are being subjected to a new and rigorous review for substantive usefulness and reproduction quality. Data of primary interest for reference or planning purposes are presented in tabular form to the extent possible.
- e. Subject matter of primary interest to military readers is now brought together in a final chapter called Military Factors.

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g. During the latter part of the current fiscal year, I propose to begin producing the General Survey in a bound-by-chapter format. (Annex A shows the chapter breakdown.) This format will have several advantages. It permits the updating of given chapters -- Economic or Government and Politics, for example -- without having to revise and reprint the entire General Survey volume. It permits selective and more efficient dissemination and filing practices. And it avoids publication of overly bulky and unwieldy single volumes.

h. At changeover to the bound-by-chapter format, a new first chapter, called the Country Profile, will be initiated. This short study will be designed especially for the high level reader seeking a quick orientation and comprehension. (Annex B is a mock-up of the Country Profile.)

9. Thus far, I have discussed the NIS task from the point of view of consolidating a disparate program and of improving its utility and quality. To cope with current and anticipated pressures on budget and manpower in the intelligence community, I also propose a number of changes that will reduce the research, reproduction, and manpower costs of the NIS program. The proposed changes are based on the assumption that the development and maintenance of a strong, high quality and broadly useful national basic intelligence program, based entirely on the General Survey, would serve the government well and would be within the resources of the intelligence community. Such a program would provide a coordinated, basic reference source, and a general orientation and country familiarization publication. It would also maintain the essential foundation and structure to meet any future requirement for an expanded national basic intelligence research and production effort.

10. To accomplish the above, I recommend:

a. that the detailed supplements on the Armed Forces of Communist China and the USSR be discontinued at the end of FY 72 and that carefully selected and essential subject matter contained in them be integrated into the Military Affairs chapter of the General Survey.

b. that the remaining detailed sections be dropped from the NIS program at the end of FY 72. Some of them are of very limited use; and a number are being produced at the rate of only one or two per year. Serious thought must be given to identification of especially and widely useful data in the detailed sections that could be integrated into the General Survey in less detailed form. (Annex C lists and appraises briefly the detailed sections scheduled for FY 72.)

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11. To assist me in rethinking and reshaping the NIS program, I have organized an NIS Policy Advisory Panel [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The enlightened commentary and suggestions from members of the panel have helped me in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the program, in identifying its proper audience, and in planning what I believe to be a feasible and broadly useful program for the future. However, the observations and proposals contained in this memorandum are my own and have not been formally reviewed or endorsed by the Panel. Neither has the memorandum been reviewed by the NIS Committee. I seek first to find if this assessment and plan of action is in accordance with your sense of the situation.

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[REDACTED]
Basic and Geographic Intelligence
and
Chairman, NIS Committee

Attachments:

- Annex A: Proposed new Format for the General Survey
- Annex B: Mock-up of a Country Profile
- Annex C: NIS Detailed Sections Scheduled for FY 72

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